

Bristol Bay and Kuskokwim River (Alaska) Salmon

Date of Declaration/Determination: November 5, 1997

Location: Bristol Bay and Kuskokwim River Regions of Alaska

Cause: Due to natural disaster of unknown causes (possibly El Nino effects on water temperature) that resulted in extremely low returns of salmon to the region.

Authority: Sec 312(a) of MSA

Appropriation: 1998 Supplemental, November 19, 1997--\$7 million

State Match	\$2.3 million
Total of Award	\$9.3 million

Assistance Provided:

A grant was awarded to the State of Alaska in March 1998 to administer a four-part program of assistance:

- Community grants (\$6.7 million) (about \$5 mil Federal)
- Individual loan program (\$1.87 million) (about \$1.4 mil Fed)
- Economic planning grants (\$183.5 K) (about \$138 K Fed)
- Fisheries research, education, and training grants (\$390.2 K) (about \$293 K fed)

The State awarded most of the funds as community grants to 54 communities identified as being affected by the commercial salmon fishery failure. The communities administered the funds for projects to assess the economic or social effects of the commercial fisheries failure or to help diversify and enhance the local economy. Infrastructure development/improvement projects were funded to benefit the community and promote economic diversity. Projects such as docks, harbors, bulkheads, and beach and airport access had to show benefit to the overall economic welfare of the community, and not just benefit the commercial fishing industry. The goal of the community grants was to help to make the economies of the Bristol Bay and Kuskokwim communities less dependent on fishing, thus placing less stress on the resource and reducing the potential impacts of a future fishery failure.

The individual loan program made interest free loans of up to \$1000 available to permit holders who earned at least 51 percent of their annual income in 1995 and 1996 from commercial fisheries

in the Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim or Chignik fisheries, regardless of their place of residence. Alaska residents could use their Permanent Fund dividends both as collateral and as repayment in two installments. The repaid loan funds are to become part of a State-administered revolving loan fund to be used to address future commercial fishery failures.

The economic planning component provided grants to help affected communities develop or improve community economic development planning, including marketing studies, land use plans or capital improvement plans.

Fisheries education, training, and research grants were available on a competitive basis to individuals, communities, and organizations. One of the goals of this component was to attempt to determine the causes of the commercial fishery failure, in order to prevent future failures.

The Alaska Region has prepared an evaluation of both Alaska salmon disaster programs. One of the problems with the initial program was the denial by the State legislature of the 25% in matching funds required under the grant. The communities were then asked to provide some of the match, and funds had to be reprogrammed, but eventually the State Office of Management and Budget provided funds for the match. However, the delays caused problems with conducting the program.